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## BOOK REVIEWS

IN CHARGE OF

M. E. CAMERON, R.N.

THE LIFE OF FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE. By Sir E. T. Cook. Two volumes. Price, \$7.50 the set. The Macmillan Company, 66 Fifth Avenue, New York.

Never perhaps has there been presented a more striking combination of two entirely opposite characteristics in one personality, the intensely spiritual, and the uncompromisingly practical, than Sir Edward Cook gives us in his vivid picture of the founder of modern nursing. Intensely spiritual, she sought continually the Kingdom of Heaven, and found, or believed that she found it, in service to her fellowmen. That this should lead her far outside those safely guarded ways decreed by the restrictions of class and the duty of filial obedience, did not in the least dismay her, or divert her from her purpose, once that purpose had crystallized into the belief that "union with God meant coöperation with Him towards human perfectibility." Compared with the independence of youth in the present day, her revolt against the life incumbent on her station in society will seem very curious; but remembering the conditions by which she found herself governed, one is awed at the determination evinced to find out a field of usefulness and fit herself to occupy it worthily. Her early views of nursing included no visions of the Crimea and its gigantic demands for heroism. The life at Kaiserswerth promised nothing of events which were to make her name world-known. Her choice was made in obedience to sincere belief in her vocation and with no regard to its rewards. She was told on all sides of the shocking immorality and drunkenness which prevailed among the nurses in both English and Continental hospitals, but the only effect was that the more she learned of bad conditions, the more determined was she to make them better. There was, for a time, an idea of adopting a religious order, thereby ensuring protection to the ladies whom she hoped to enlist in the work of nursing, but this idea was relinquished; probably it was one of many ways in which she endeavored to win the sympathy of her family, who continued to try and keep her from carrying out her plans. Suffering deeply over this knowledge of wounding her own nearest and

dearest, she yet held firm, and after such training as was to be obtained by actual residence in Kaiserswerth; and by visiting and close inspection of many of the hospitals in the United Kingdom, as well as those of the large European cities, she started a nursing home, or small hospital, in Harley Street, London, where it was her intention to work out the problems of nursing for herself, and later make use of her experience in training others. Here she found scope for her plenteous activity. Besides battling with the British workman and the British tradesman, she learned what it was to work, hampered by a committee rather than helped by it, and dependent on a medical staff who are but doubtful supporters. It proved to be merely an experiment, as she was called to greater things fourteen months later. In the meantime, Miss Nightingale had become convinced that the situation at Harley Street did not contain the possibilities of expansion that were necessary for the plan which was shaping in her mind for the reorganization of nursing. Out of some special war correspondence to the *Times*, had arisen a wave of popular indignation against the lack of care for the sick and wounded at the front. Public opinion became so urgent that the war office was constrained to adopt the idea, earlier formulated by some benevolent ladies, of sending out some women nurses. Miss Nightingale was appointed superintendent, and took with her a party of thirty-eight nurses, some trained in religious orders in hospitals. With her went her friends, Mr. and Mrs. Bracelridge. With what mingled feelings were her marching orders received! Her friends, especially her family, looked upon it as deliverance from the inferior and commonplace, and rejoiced that she would find "an opportunity of action worthy of her." To herself these orders meant the promise of fulfilment of those early dreams which of late years had developed into the purpose of regenerating hospital administration and hospital nursing. To the medical men of conservative minds, it appeared a doubtful experiment, but there were not wanting those who hailed it as a precedent established, which would multiply in good for all time.

Whatever deficiencies existed in the training which up to this time Miss Nightingale had experienced she was now destined to correct them with interest. "I work in the wards all day," she writes, and the nature of her work reveals itself as she requisitions 200 scrubbers for the floor. Her first attack was on the awful conditions of filth that existed, attracting vermin which swarmed the beds and bodies of the men; not a basin, towel or piece of soap was to be had. No clean linen of any description was available, a laundry was one of the first of her creations. Extra diet kitchens followed quickly. The nursing under these circumstances might easily have appalled a veteran organizer, but we learn that it was

arranged with every consideration of order possible; the nurses having carefully-regulated hours for rest and sleep. Administration work was not the only portion of the superintendent however. We read of her being eight hours on her knees, dressing wounds, or again of hours spent with those dying of cholera or fever. Her distribution of nurses left the most incompetent and unreliable immediately under her own eye, making good all their faults by greater exertion on her own part. Her way as organizer was not made easier by the action of friends at home, sending out a new contingent of nurses while she was still struggling to adjust and combine those she had into an effectual working body, no easy task with material gathered in haste and from many sources, but the task moved toward completion under her firm and steady hand and each day she gathered material for the master task of her life. We do well to keep in mind how hard a school it was, and what painful processes of elimination and selection yielded her the knowledge that has gone to the building up of the nursing profession. The conditions of physical discomfort, the atmosphere of suffering should be remembered in taking the measure of her fortitude and devotion; since it is only too true that, "the pioneers of one generation are forgotten when their work has passed into accepted doctrine." She was constantly under fire, conservative medical etiquette (to which she early learned to defer, for the sake of maintaining discipline) did not spare her. The cupidity that looked to maladministration for its harvest watched, with jealous eyes, to find faults; and finally the church, High, Low Protestant and Catholic, assailed her motives, and picked flaws in her methods. Interference and criticism were accepted philosophically, however, and in the spirit of some other reformer, who formulated the statement that you "can't make an omelet without breaking eggs." The death rate, which had been forty-two per cent at first, had fallen to twenty-two per thousand, after six months, and figures like these were more flattering to Miss Nightingale's "passionately statistical mind," than any amount of popular encomium.

Returning to England at the end of the war to find herself the idol of the nation, she had but one thought—to utilize her experience and her reputation for the furtherance of her ideals. The first task was the reform of the sanitary conditions of the Army, involving such labors as can only be realized by the careful reading of Part III of the biography, as it entails the marshalling of politicians, statesmen, army officials, commissions, departments, etc., all of which were as so many grades in the school where Miss Nightingale attained the right to her place as educator and reformer.

Sir Edward Cook names three celebrities of the nineteenth century: "Simpson the introducer of chloroform, Lister, inventor of antiseptic

surgery; and Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing. The second of the great discoveries completed the beneficent work of the first. The third development, the creation of nursing as a trained profession, has coöperated powerfully with the other two, and would have been beneficent, even if the use of anaesthetics and antiseptics had not been discovered. The contribution of Florence Nightingale to the healing art was less original than that of Simpson or Lister; but perhaps from its wider range, it has saved as many lives, and relieved as much, if not so acute, suffering as either of the other two."

The publication of *Notes on Nursing* in December, 1859, and the opening of the Nightingale Training School for Nurses on June 24, 1860, are two dates that should appear in red on every nurses' calendar. The School was established by means of a fund of £44,000, contributed by the British Empire for a testimonial to Miss Nightingale. The reviewer is tempted to transcribe pages of the book relating to the laying of these foundation stones of the profession but space forbids, and one only may note that so far, there has been nothing written that supersedes the *Notes on Nursing*, and that the essential principles of nurse training schools today are the same as those formulated by Miss Nightingale for her first training school. It is true that many schools require less of personal character and technical acquirement than Miss Nightingale's school called for, but where such is the case the school is at fault, and would be greatly benefited by bringing its standards up to hers.

Of the remainder of the long life, so full of beneficent work, we have no space to write but we cannot close the subject without a word of the many and variously interesting people who appear in the pages of this book: the picture of early Victorian life in England that passes before our eyes with the early life of Miss Nightingale; the glimpses afforded us of Mrs. Nightingale, so gently yet obstinately determined to uphold the excellencies of British institutions, from religion to cooking, against the universe; the pathetic spectacle of her husband, valiant in his allegiance to his wife, so long as her eye is upon him, but making secession to his daughter privately, and hugely enjoying the novelty and interest of her ventures, the many historical personages who revolve round Miss Nightingale and whom she keeps in motion, enacting this or that part in the schemes which are to set great things going. What labors of correspondence—what exercise of that last resort and powerful tool of women, *influence*—these would fill volumes and we earnestly advise our readers to get them at first hand if they would not miss some good reading.

Yet one word more for the friendships of Florence Nightingale. Once her friend was her friend till death—of these most notably stand out, Arthur Hugh Clough—Sidney Herbert—and last, Benjamin Jowett,

the Master of Baliol, sometimes called the maker of prime ministers. She may be said to have had a capacity for friendship that is seldom met with. She made great demands of her friends but they loved to serve her. The picture of the lonely old age that ends this life of usefulness, a life prolonged far beyond the usual span, leaves one sad; but reflection is cheering, and one is glad to believe that her work does not end with death, that the acorn she planted in the hope that it might produce a forest, is fulfilling its destiny, and that nurse training schools over the civilized world may keep alive the principles she laid down for the guidance of nurses until a greater than she comes.